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Residents' Preference on Conservation of the Malay Traditional Village in Kampong Morten, Malacca

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Abstract

Rural landscape in Malaysia, face intense development pressures from nearby urban areas. Sustaining rural landscape will continue the traditional village stewardship by local residents. The aim of this paper is to explore the Kampong Morten residents' preference on conservation of the Malay traditional houses. The results show 62% of the resident's concern that the rural landscape should not be over developed that could erode the aesthetic value of their traditional houses. 83% of the resident's value the traditional houses has a heritage. The result also indicated that the declaration of living museum that could benefit to the local people.

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Keywords: Traditional village; living museum; conservation

1. Introduction

Cultural landscape nowadays, can be seen as the only one basic needs in our daily life, but it is have significant economic, social, and demographic changes. Over the centuries, Malaysian cultural landscape changes are due to various anthropogenic activities. In the late 1970s, transformation of Malaysia as a developing country continues to

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grow. The speed of growth towards industrialization has changed the way of life of the Malay population after it is independence. Several numbers of the rubber and oil palm plantations was converted into urban and built-up areas, which include housing areas, new townships, and industrial estates. However, some quite a number of areas in our country still show the characteristics and features of a cultural landscape such as paddy fields, vegetable farms and or orchards are still can be seen until today (Abdullah, 2011). Certain rural areas have maintained their traditional appearance, while development continues to erode the natural environment. The cultural values that embodied in the landscapes that have maintained traditions throughout previous generations continuing are under threat (Nurulhuda Adabiah & Nuraisyah Chua, 2013).

Historically, the Malay Peninsula was the land of immigrants that they came from the regions of Southeast Asia archipelago, India, and China. Early civilization, people in Southeast Asia shared similar linguistic and anthropological traces. They built their houses on stilts, grew rice and millet, domesticated animals, betel chewing, sailed with outrigger vessels (Thompson, 2004; Wiryomartono, 2013). However, since the British colonial era, each ethnic group runs their own inhabits based on their values and belief system. This could be seen from the socio-cultural and historical habitation system during the colonial era that spatial divides which mutually reinforced ethnic or racial distinctions. For the most part, Malays lived in rural kampongs ('villages'); Indians worked on the British plantation estates; and the Chinese on smaller plantations and in the mines (Bunnell, 2002). Indeed, the practice of colonialism rule has left various ethnic groups elsewhere, then the Malay populations, such as Chinese and Tamil people, in their own worlds (Wiryomartono, 2013). However, multicultural populations have grown significantly during this period. Today, the presence of multicultural populations that they inherit have enriched and enhanced the experience in the Malay world with unique architecture, pottery, culinary, street life, festivals, and celebrations in this region. In Malaysia, Malacca is one of the states that shown a unique example of multicultural populations. Malacca is also a living testimony to the multicultural heritage and tradition of Asia, and European colonial influences. This multicultural tangible and intangible heritage is expressed in the great variety of religious buildings of different faiths, ethnic quarters, the many languages, worship and religious festivals, dances, costumes, art and music, food, and daily life; and criterion. The mixture of multicultural heritage is also reflected through the uniqueness of architecture, culture and townscape without parallel anywhere in East and South Asia (Gullino & Larcher, 2013).

Malacca Historic Cities presented a heritage rooted in a distinctively Malay past, Malay commerce, political power and cultural expansion (Worden, 2003). Thus, the significant of heritage and cultural sites, it is a symbol of the Malaysian cultural experience. Malacca has been declared as a World Heritage Site by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2008). One of the three-selection criteria in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) guideline was the variety of multi-cultural activities of the cultural community in Malacca. The cultural community of Malacca resides in the core and buffer zones of the inscribed WHS location, namely Morten Village, Portuguese Village, Heren and Jonker Streets and Chetty Village (Aisyah Abu, Mariana, Syahriah, & Ibrahim, 2014). Since, Malacca Historic Cities represent a symbolizes of a 'golden age' in the development of Malay civilization and in that regard the emphasis on Malay and Islamic culture in the construction of a national identity. During the sultanate rule period, most of the Malay residential dominates along the Melaka River, nevertheless, it was gradually displaced (in what is now the heritage zone) and Kampong Hulu (which was also a district for Arab residents) to such districts as Kampong Morten and Durian Daun Dalam; central Melaka is now the home primarily of Chinese (King, 2012). In aim this paper, is to examine the community understand towards the qualities of the rural landscape that are valuable to local residents.

Kampong Morten has been privileged to become one the cultural heritage sites in the Malacca World Heritage Site by the UNESCO (2008). Kampong Morten has it is their own uniqueness Malay traditional house. This village is situated in the middle of Malacca cities that it still retains their traditional features such as home design, decoration, landscape and others. Most of the houses are built from the local timber and single storey structure. Kampong Morten was given a wonderful experience to the visitors because it has their own unique traditional Malay identity. Hence, the state government gazetted the Kampong Morten as a traditional Malay village of heritage that significant as a tourist destination in Malacca. Kampong Morten is the only rural landscapes of Malay village that still exist in the historic city of Malacca. Despite the years, the people have maintained its customs and traditions that are many unique of traditional house that can be seen today. However, the traditional house structure is often having problem to keep the original materials. Some part of the traditional Malay kampong has been threatened by

new residential development at the edge of metropolitan areas. Then the peoples still choose the rural way of life within the vicinity of the Malacca town centre. Thus, Kampong Morten village, can be seen today as a place that containing historic materials and also shows the identity of a culture in a community that has been inherited by the generations. Although, the fast growing of urban development will give some modernization in rural areas can be ignored. However, with the willingness of the community to preserve and conserve of their village will become another element of attraction of place especially in ecotourism.

Kathrin(2012) noted that a living museum it is the first and foremost to be seen as a traditional school for the children of a community to understand their cultural background. Others researcher would define that a living museum is a type of museum, which the historical events is showing the life in ancient times are performed, especially in ethnographic or historical views. A living museum, it's also a type of museum that recreates the fullest extent conditions of a culture, natural environment or historical period. However, sometimes, a drama performing group of historical re-enactment of historical scenes in historical buildings are also can be considered as a living museum. According to Kamarul Syahril, A. Ghafar, & Lilawati (2007) the importance of tourism for which it is able to attract more local foreign tourist to visit and appreciate the unique architecture and appearance of the city and its cultural heritage available in an area. On the other hand, Fatimah, Zainal Abidin, & Mohammad Ashraf, (2011) mention that the conservation of old buildings can be considered as one of the industries or areas that contribute to the country's economic course in the tourism sector. The significant heritage buildings and sites such as the physical is one element important in the development of the tourism product of the country. Thus, the traditional houses can be one of the heritage buildings can pursued the local community maintain their traditional house as one of the ecotourism attraction. The Malay traditional houses can show the aesthetic value in construction such as the carving motif that reflects the identity of the Malay. Another aspect we could see here that; 'If you know your origins you can understand your present,' It is seen as a place where traditional knowledge can be circulated and cultural memory can be reproduced(Kathrin, 2012). The idea is to revive the cultural values of the younger generation who did not have the opportunity to enjoy their culture during the past as to promote understanding through respect for cultural traditions of their older generations.

Since, in the early 1980's, Malacca Historic Cities are popular sites for a tourist attraction(Azman, 2007), but it is also a symbol of the Malaysian cultural experience. In its stones, its streets, its peoples and its social transactions are synthesized a national ethos, a cultural style, a world view that has been engendered by the vicissitudes of six centuries of history(King, 2012; Sandhu, 1983). Realising on the importance of its one of the Malay cultural sites, the village has been declared as "living museum" by the state. In order for planners to develop alternative strategies for accommodating residential development, they need to understand the qualities of the rural landscape that are valuable to local residents. The main goal of this study is to evaluate community benefits and attitude on the declaration of the traditional house as a living museum. The community preference for traditional rural development, their perceptions of rural character, and their attitudes toward rural living in general are examined in order to determine the community benefits and attitude towards their traditional house as a living museum.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Sites study

This study was being done on the residents in Kampong Morten, Malacca. This study just focused on the conservation of the Malay traditional village as a living museum. The village was opened in 1992 with an area of 5.02 hectares. It is located next to the Malacca River that was very popular with its Malacca River Cruise. There are 100 houses including 52 Malacca traditional dwellings and a mosque with 600 residents in this village. Kampong Morten is very synonymous with Malay village that situated in the middle of Malacca city (Fig.1. (a)). The resident in Kampong Morten also still continue their traditional Malay wedding dais, bathed in yellow colour as well as wear various Malays wedding costumes that aged some 20 years as a part of their traditional wedding paraphernalia. Besides that, there are unique interior designs; musical instruments and antique furniture that are still remaining as a display in their houses.

There is also a room decorated like that of a Malay wedding room during the old days of the Melaka sultanate (Fig.1 (b)). Among other exhibits are a gong believed to be two centuries old, a 100-year-old cupboard and ceramics. Also present is an 80-year-old Quran and an English-Arab dictionary published in 1926. There is also a glass cabinet that displays antique cameras.



Fig. 1. (a) The Kampong Morten entrance . Fig. (b) Malay traditional wedding dais.



Fig. 2. (a) The Malay traditional landscape. Fig. (b) View of typical Malay traditional houses.

2.2. Survey instrumental

The instrument of this survey was designed to measure the following: i) socio demographic characteristics of the residents; ii) residents understanding towards their village as a living museum; iii) residents perception towards benefits on traditional house as well regard as a living museum. The survey consisted primarily of categorical choice questions and Likert-type survey items that provided a list of statements or characteristics of interest (e.g., residents understanding towards their village as a living museum) and asked respondents to tick the space associated with their level of agreement or concern about that particular statement or characteristic. In a certain case, open-ended questions were included (e.g., Living Museum is a place where people can understand their cultural background; knowledge of history can be transmitted and reproduced cultural memory). A complete listing of responses to open-ended questions, as well as any additional comments provided.

2.3. Sampling method and data analysis

There were several methods used in order to gain the data collections in this research such as observations, interviews and questionnaire surveys. The primary data for this study were gathered through interviewing by selecting the residents randomly. A total of 201 residents were interviewed in Kampong Morten to elicit their preference for traditional rural development, their perceptions of rural character, and their attitudes towards rural living in general. Most of the residents gave full cooperation during the field survey. A pilot test was conducted with 30 individuals with a different background from the study area. Overall, most of the respondents could answer the questionnaire in less than 5 minutes. The data were analysed using the SPSS software.

3. Result and discussion

A total of 201 questionnaires was completed through face-to face interview at the study area. For a socioeconomic profile of the respondents (Table 1), 36% were male respondents, while almost 64% are female respondents. The results of the analysis show that the majority of the residents are in the age of 31 to 50 years old. The majority of the residents were Malay and embracing Islamic religion. The Malay community has inhabited the village more than a century. This can show that the resident were the third and fourth generation of the Malays. The results of this study also show that 84% of respondents are the permanent residents of the village and only 16% of respondent are non – residents which are the tourist, researcher and students (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic of the respondents.

Gender	Male		Female		Total (N)
	36.3%		63.7%		100%
Resident's Age	Below 18	19 to 30	31 to 49	More than 50	
	3.5%	22.4%	38.3%	35.8%	100.0%
Resident Status	Permanent Resident		Non-resident		Total (N)
	84.0%		16.0%		100.0%

Kampong Morten is already well known as the Malay cultural traditional village since the since the British colonial era. The village name was made under the name of the district officer, namely JF Morten which is in service during that time. This village is located near to the Melaka River, which the river is the mode of transportation. Unlike the urban villages in other states, Kampong Morten still retains traditional features such as home design, decoration and rural landscape. The state government has gazetted the village as a traditional Malay village since, it's have heritage significance and tourist attraction in Malacca. The studies show that 64% of the respondents inherited their traditional houses were coming from the third generation. While 23% of the respondents inherited their traditional houses were coming from the fourth generation. Almost all of the residents inherit of the traditional houses from their grandparent, but however, changes in hands will threat the originality of the landscape and design of houses. The result also shows that, almost 35% of the houses are still remaining as its original building compared to 65% of the houses has been renovated due to their spatial needs and family enlargement. Several numbers of the traditional houses were not rebuilt due to high cost of maintenance but however, the renovations were done are mostly in part of the kitchen and the central part of the house which is 'rumah ibu' (Table 2).

Based on the analysis, almost 70% of the respondents relative stays in the village and only 30% of the respondent relatives living outside. The analysis shows that the family institutions of Kampong Morten were very close and this shows that the community keep their tradition and living in harmonies. In keeping this tradition the residents of Kampong Morten can get a lot of benefit in term of conservation Malay traditional assets and preserve the uniqueness of Malay traditional cultural from the past (Table 2).

This study also shows that all of the resident's agree that the Kampong Morten as a "living museum" and as part of the ancient subtlety heritage. Besides that, almost 69% of the residents agree that by introducing the uniqueness of traditional house will give higher positive impact on the Kampong Morten as a "living museum". At the same time, almost all of the residents also agree on preservation Kampong Morten will give full memories of the past family history. The acceptance of the concept of "living museum" in Kampong Morten among the residents could positives impact to towards their generation on the future (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristic of respondent perceptions.

The house that occupied that is now in the original form before?	Yes	No	
	35.8%	64.2%	100.0%

Do your relatives live in this village?	69.2%		30.8%		100.0%
The declaration of living museum will maintain the traditional house from extinction.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1.0%	0	10.9%	60.2%	27.9%
Communities can introduce ancient of subtlety heritage.	0	0	0	73.6%	26.4%

4. Conclusion

The resident perception on Kampong Morten as a “living museum” is in a positive side. It is because, from the primary data that has been collected, it is shown that, the residents agree with the concept of “living museum”. From the resident perception, they get a lot of benefits and at the same time they can do a lot of activity to promote their tourism industry. On the other hand, by conservation of their heritage values that they inherit from the older generation could prevent threat the originality of the Malay traditional village and their traditional houses.

Today, the fastest growing urban development will give some modernization in rural areas such as in Kampong Morten can be ignored. However, with the acceptable of the community to preserve and conserve of their village as a “living museum”, it will become another element of uniqueness of the Kampong Morten community. The initiative among the residents in the preservation and conservation of the heritage of the Kampong Morten village should become as eye opener to the local authorities. Several policies, rule and regulation should be established in the ways to preserve the heritage assets as that can be inherited to the younger generation.

In the planning for the future study as a heritage site, initiatives should be given to the residents and owner of the house that retains their traditional house. Furthermore, there is a need to establish policy on the conservation of the Malay traditional village could preserve the Malay cultural practices.

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